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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 000856

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STATE FOR DRL/AE WENDY SILVERMAN AND EUR/CARC LANE BAHL

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [OSCE](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [EUN](#) [AJ](#) [RO](#)

SUBJECT: ROMANIA: DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS IN
AZERBAIJAN

REF: STATE 99391

Classified By: Polcouns Ted Tanoue for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Deputy Polcouns delivered on 23 July reftel demarche to MFA Director for East Europe and Central Asia Ambassador Gheorghe Magheru. Magheru was in agreement with the U.S. points and expressed special interest in the strategic context for the U.S. demarche (i.e., the importance of making sure that Azerbaijan maintains a westward orientation). Noting that Romania has a unique relationship--both based on energy politics and historical links--with Azerbaijan, he agreed that Romania is well placed to speak to the Azeri government about "our shared concerns." He said that Azerbaijan was in a tough neighborhood and is feeling "under siege", noting that in the last 15 years the number of mosques in Azerbaijan has jumped from 70 to 1500 by President Aliyev's own estimate. Magheru also noted that there are increased reports about more radical Wahabi-inspired sermons coming from the Imam in Azerbaijan. Because of this situation, he said it was important that President Aliyev has a sense that he can get something positive out of changing his attitude. He asked rhetorically: how does the U.S. hope to get Aliyev to realize that sustaining a strong and proactive human rights agenda is in Azerbaijan's interest?

12. (C) Aside from evincing general agreement with the reftel demarche points, Magheru noted that EU member states had previously raised with Baku their concerns about "the state of democracy in Azerbaijan," including its human rights commitments. Magheru said that Aliyev through his Chief of Staff Ramiz Mehdiyev had responded to the EU's concerns and to Romania's own bilateral demarches by citing the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and the increase of extremist Islamic influence as the main impediments to reform, and by asking for the EU's "understanding." Magheru also noted that the GOR had issued a statement in accordance with the EU position on elections in Nagorno-Karabakh, along with a national statement reasserting principles on territorial integrity and support for the Minsk Group co-chairs position in favor of negotiations. Magheru said he was hopeful that the EU's "Good Neighborhood Policy" would help get Azerbaijan to be more responsive on human rights concerns. Magheru suggested that the GNP offers a reasonable perspective for Azerbaijan to build its relationship with the EU and which would serve as an encouragement for states in transition to stay oriented on Euro-Atlantic values. He warned, however, that Mehdiyev's response when Romania delivered its message was: "we may have a disease but please don't kill the patient."

13. (C) Comment: Magheru suggested that the U.S. should look at ways to corroborate with the EU on the promotion of the "good neighborhood policy." He speculated that next year's NATO Summit in Bucharest might provide an opportunity to move

Baku in the right direction. Meanwhile we note that the GOR's approach towards Nagorno-Karabakh is consistent with its general view on all of the frozen conflicts, and--with its specific focus on matters of "territorial integrity"--with Romania's views towards Kosovo. End Comment.
TAUBMAN